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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2009

PM Erdogan Reshuffles the Cabinet
Prime Minister Erdogan announced changes to his cabinet on Friday evening following a meeting with President Gul during which Gul approved of the cabinet changes. Saturday's Islamist-oriented Zaman called Erdogan's cabinet changes 'radical' and mainstream Vatan said "Erdogan opened a new page." Meanwhile, mainstream Sabah called the cabinet "the cabinet of change." Saturday's mainstream Hurriyet reported that eight ministers lost their seats at the Cabinet. According to the paper, those eight ministers "were held responsible for the AKP's defeats in the recent municipal elections."

The new cabinet ministers are as follows:
State Minister and Deputy PM Bulent Arinc
State Minister Cevdet Caglar
State Minister Selma Aliye Kavaf
Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin
Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu
Public Works Minister Mustafa Demir
Labor Minister Omer Dincer
Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergun
Energy Minister Taner Yildiz.

The ministers who are keeping their posts and/or who have been assigned to new posts include the following:
State Minister and Deputy PM Cemil Cicek

State Minister Mehmet Aydin

State Minister Hayati Yazici
State Minister Nafiz Ozak
State Minister Faruk Celik
State Minister Zafer Caglayan
State Minister and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bagis
Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul
Interior Minister Besir Atalay
Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek
Education Minister Nimet Cubukcu
Health Minister Recep Akdag
Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim
Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker

Culture and Tourism Minister
Environment and Forestry Minister

Ertugrul Gunay
Veysel Eroglu.

Former Foreign Minister Ali Babacan is now the State Minister and Deputy PM in charge of the economy.

Editorial Opinion on Cabinet Reshuffle

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The cabinet revision gives us no hope for the future. The cabinet's composition basically indicates the current dominance of the Milli Gorus, or 'The National View' which is the ideology that politicizes Islam within the government in Turkey. The new cabinet remains far from being centrist, and this cabinet revision proves the AKP is not a centrist party."

Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "The cabinet reshuffle has provided enough fuel to reenergize the government. Especially after the elections, such a revitalized energy will launch efforts toward further democratization."

Omer Taspinar wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Washington is paying close attention to the new Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu as part of the new cabinet. He is a well known and appreciated figure, and his foreign policy priorities are known. It will be very good if Minister Davutoglu begins his tenure by prioritizing Turkey's relations with the European Union."

Kadri Gursel wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "The appointment of

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Davutoglu as the new foreign minister simply makes something official that was de facto. Davutoglu should give priority to EU relations, but that is unlikely. Minister Davutoglu will continue to prioritize the Middle East and Africa while relations with the Western world will be carried out through Washington."

Okay Gonensin wrote in mainstream Vatan: "The reshuffle has given two basic messages. First, Prime Minister Erdogan has finally, albeit belatedly, acknowledged mismanagement during the current economic crisis. On the other hand, the Islamist roots now dominate the cabinet, which shows that the AKP's major concern is the rise of the Islamist Saadet Party."

Yasin Aktay wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "With the revised list of the cabinet, the ruling AKP is now more capable of addressing the concerns of its party roots. The cabinet design is good enough to energize this."

Iraq's Shiite Leader Moqtada Al-Sadr Brought from Iran to Turkey
Most weekend papers reported that the Turkish Foreign Ministry sent a plane to Iran to bring Iraq's radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr to Turkey to meet with Turkish leaders and with some members of the Sadr movement living in Europe, who arrived in Istanbul separately. The members of the Sadr movement met in Istanbul to discuss the restructuring of the movement prior to Iraq's upcoming general elections. Around 80 Iraqis attended the meetings. President Gul held an unannounced meeting with al-Sadr, while PM Erdogan also met with him, as did the MFA's Iraq Envoy Murat Ozcelik. Media reported unnamed sources at Cankaya Palace described Ankara's invitation to Sadr as "part of Turkey's approach to being in touch with all Iraqi groups," as "The situation in Iraq has critical importance. There are developments regarding controversial areas and there is also the issue of the oil law, which is very important for the Shiites." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports that the Iraqi Shiite leader extended full support to Turkey over the fate of Iraq's oil rich city, Kirkuk. Sadr said "Any change in the status of Kirkuk would harm Iraq's territorial integrity." Mainstream Milliyet notes that "Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, who is known for his anti-American stance, stayed at the Conrad Hotel during his visit to Istanbul" which meant he was staying at the hotel "at the same time as American military officials who were attending preparatory meetings ahead of the NATO Naval Commandants' Summit."

US Warns Barzani Not to Disrupt Relations With Turkey

There is straightforward coverage today of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher Hill's meetings in Salahaddin town of northern Iraq with Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani. NTV notes "The new ambassador told Barzani he does not want the KRG to abandon relations with Turkey." Liberal Radikal reports, "Hill warned Barzani not to abandon ties with Turkey." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports "Barzani Received the U.S. Ambassador" to "discuss relations with Turkey."

U.S. Releases Terrorism Report

Mainstream papers on Saturday highlighted the Turkey section of the Annual Terrorism Report by focusing on the Ergenekon case. Hurriyet, Milliyet and Cumhuriyet noted that the report carried details about the ongoing Ergenekon investigation, but mentioned that "details are murky" and "the status of Ergenekon as a terrorist organization remains controversial."

Turkey is on the U.S. Watch List for Religious Freedom

During the weekend, all major papers reported that the U.S. International Religious Freedom Commission, for the first time, included Turkey on its watch list. The report says the right to free worship is imperiled in Turkey and religious minorities' rights are restricted because of the way secularism is being interpreted.

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The Swine Flu Battlefield. (Milliyet)

Media outlets note the likelihood that H1N1 flu could spread to Turkey, and some outlets stoke the fear by noting that an entire hotel in Hong Kong was quarantined because of the virus. Mainstream Vatan headlines "This Is Not A Joke - Swine Flu Could Come to Turkey at Any Moment," and notes "If you develop symptom similar to flu symptoms, you should go to only one address - the hospital." Conservative nationalist Turkiye headlines "Swine Flu Is Not So Far Away from Us," as "Turkey is an international tourist destination" and "it is highly likely the virus will come to Turkey." They also note to readers that "the deadly virus is spreading quickly through kissing, sneezes, and shaking hands with others." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines "A Hotel Is Quarantined" in Hong Kong where "300 people are being held like they are in prison." Conservative Bugun reports "The World Health Organization is likely to raise its warning level from a 5 to a 6 after a case in Canada where the virus was spread from a person to a pig," and "currently there are 787 cases of swine flu in 17 different countries." Mainstream Sabah reports "Despite the efforts of a number of countries to curb the spread of the flu, Egypt is culling pigs" and "those who do not want the pigs to be killed are taking to the streets and clashing with police." Mainstream Milliyet calls the streets of Cairo, "The Swine Flu Battlefield."

Civilians Caught in the Crossfire in Pakistan

Media coverage of the clashes between the Taliban and Pakistan focus on the civilians that are being held hostage or killed by the Taliban as fighting with the Pakistani military rages on. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet headlines "The Taliban Is Making a Shield Out of Civilians" as "2000 civilians are being held hostage by the Taliban against Pakistani forces," and "90,000 civilians are fleeing the fighting." CNN Turk reports "Yesterday the Taliban beheaded two officials in Svat, out of revenge for the Pakistani military's killing of two of the Taliban's top commanders." Ceyda Karan of liberal Radikal writes "Looking at Pakistan, one is reminded of Cambodia" during the Vietnam war when Viet Cong leaders were accused of staging attacks against U.S. soldiers in Vietnam from bases in Cambodia. Karan notes, "Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders are escaping across the Afghan border from U.S. forces and now civilians are being caught in the crossfire of drone attacks and the Taliban's clashes with Pakistani forces."

Turkey Takes Over NATO's Anti-Piracy Command

CNN Turk reports "Turkey Now Commands the Struggle Against Piracy." Islamist-oriented Zaman headlines "In Somalia, Turkey Takes Command of NATO Forces." Far-right Ortadogu reports "The Command for the Struggle Against Piracy Lies With Turkey," as "Turkey takes over command of the International Sea Force" and thus "will command U.S.,

French, and other EU countries' ships."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- In order to protest recent security operations against their party, the DTP officials started a two-day hunger strike.

- Rifat Hisarciklioglu, President of Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB), criticized the government for its failure to undertake timely measures against the economic crisis.

World

- Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said the country's Kurdish minority would not give up their bid for control of the disputed oil region of Kirkuk.

- Iran bombed PJAK and PKK camps in the Qandil Mountains of northern Iraq.

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